

Welcome to Socorro

Socorro has a rich and varied history: from the first occupants of the Pueblo of Pilabo to the first Spanish visitors and settlers; the Mexican period; and the most recent settlers from the eastern United States.

The Spanish saw the Socorro area in the mid-1500s and established a mission here by 1627. The mission served the local Pueblo people, the few Spanish settlers of the area and the travelers along the road between Chihuahua, Mexico and settlements to the north at Santa Fe and Taos.

The name Socorro means “help “ or “aid” in Spanish. In 1598, Juan de Oñate on his expedition north to colonize the area, gave this name to the pueblo. The pueblo people gave them badly needed food and shelter after traveling through what came to be known as *La Jornada del Muerto* (the Trail of the Dead Man or Journey of Death.)

In 1680, the Pueblo people of New Mexico rose in revolt against their Spanish masters and drove them from New Mexico. The Piro Pueblo people of Socorro did not join in the revolt and as a result retreated with the fleeing Spanish to the vicinity of modern El Paso, Texas. They never returned. Their descendants still live in *Socorro del Sur* (Socorro of the South) in Texas.

The Spanish returned to New Mexico in 1692 but the area of Socorro remained empty for some time with the town in ruins. New settlers rebuilt the church, and by the 1850s Socorro probably numbers about 600 people.

With the coming of the Santa Fe Railroad in 1880, the population quickly jumped to over 4,000. The ‘80s and ‘90s were boom years for Socorro which served as the center for mining with smelters to handle the ore. In 1889, the New Mexico School of Mines (now called New Mexico Tech) was established.

Today, Socorro is a mixture of the old and the new. We suggest you start your tour from the Plaza.

Plaza Area

Kittrel Park, in the center of the plaza, is named for a local dentist who first planted grass and trees. He is buried in the park. The plaza is still a center of community activities.

1. **The Hilton Block**, early 1880s, is of brick and replaced an earlier two-story building of adobe. The California Mis-

sion style façade on most of the building is characterized by brick trim on the eaves which was added in the early 1930s. The Hilton Drugstore was founded by a relative of Conrad Hilton and now is the Socorro Chamber of Commerce Visitors Center.

2. **The Juan Nepomuceno Garcia House** is a fine example of the Spanish-Mexican period. The building is constructed of adobe around a courtyard with a typical flat roof. Portions of the building may date from the founding of Socorro in 1816.
3. **The J.N. Garcia Opera House** built by the widow of Juan Nepomuceno Garcia in 1886. At the time there were two opera houses in Socorro. It was renovated in the 1980s by the late Holm Bursum Jr.
4. **Juan Jose Baca House** and business block predates 1880. Originally flat-roofed, the building was given a pitched roof of metal after the railroad made metal more available.
5. **San Miguel Mission** built between 1819 and 1821 is probably situated on the ruins of the earlier mission which was burned during the Pueblo Revolt in 1680. Originally flat roofed with a raised clearstory over the altar, the bell towers and pitched roof came later. The current California Mission style was added in the 1930s. Extensive restoration was completed in the 1960s.

South Side of Plaza

6. **Socorro County Courthouse** is a 1940 replacement of a former structure which was torn down as a Works Progress Administration (WPA) project. The former court house was a monument to the so-called Victorian style.
7. **Jumbo, a fragment from Trinity Site**
8. **The Capitol Bar** is made of stone and has a long and colorful history associated with the plaza and town. It was restored in 1993 following a fire caused by a lightning bolt.

Fischer Street

9. **The Fitch Building** was built in 1913 using at that time new material of poured concrete with steel reinforcing bars.

10. **The Crabtree Building** is a mix of new and old. The offices are housed in a frame building which originally was part of the Civilian Conservation Corps establishment located just north of town. It was moved to the present location in the 1930s. The adobe-like brick façade and an addition in the rear were added to complete the building.
11. **The Water Department**, a stone structure of the 1890s built when piped water came to Socorro.
12. **The Fire Station** has been at this location since 1907. The present buildings are relatively new. Socorro Volunteer Fire Department was established in 1887. It is now a city fire and rescue department.
13. Now the Knights of Pythias Hall, this building was the **Episcopal Church** from 1886 to the 1960s
14. **Jesus Maria Torres House**, 225 Fischer, a classic bungalow style built in 1913 by Mr. Torres as a home. The walls are of adobe but all of the trim, windows, and doors were purchased by mail-order through the Crabtree Lumber Company.

Park-Church-McCutcheon Streets

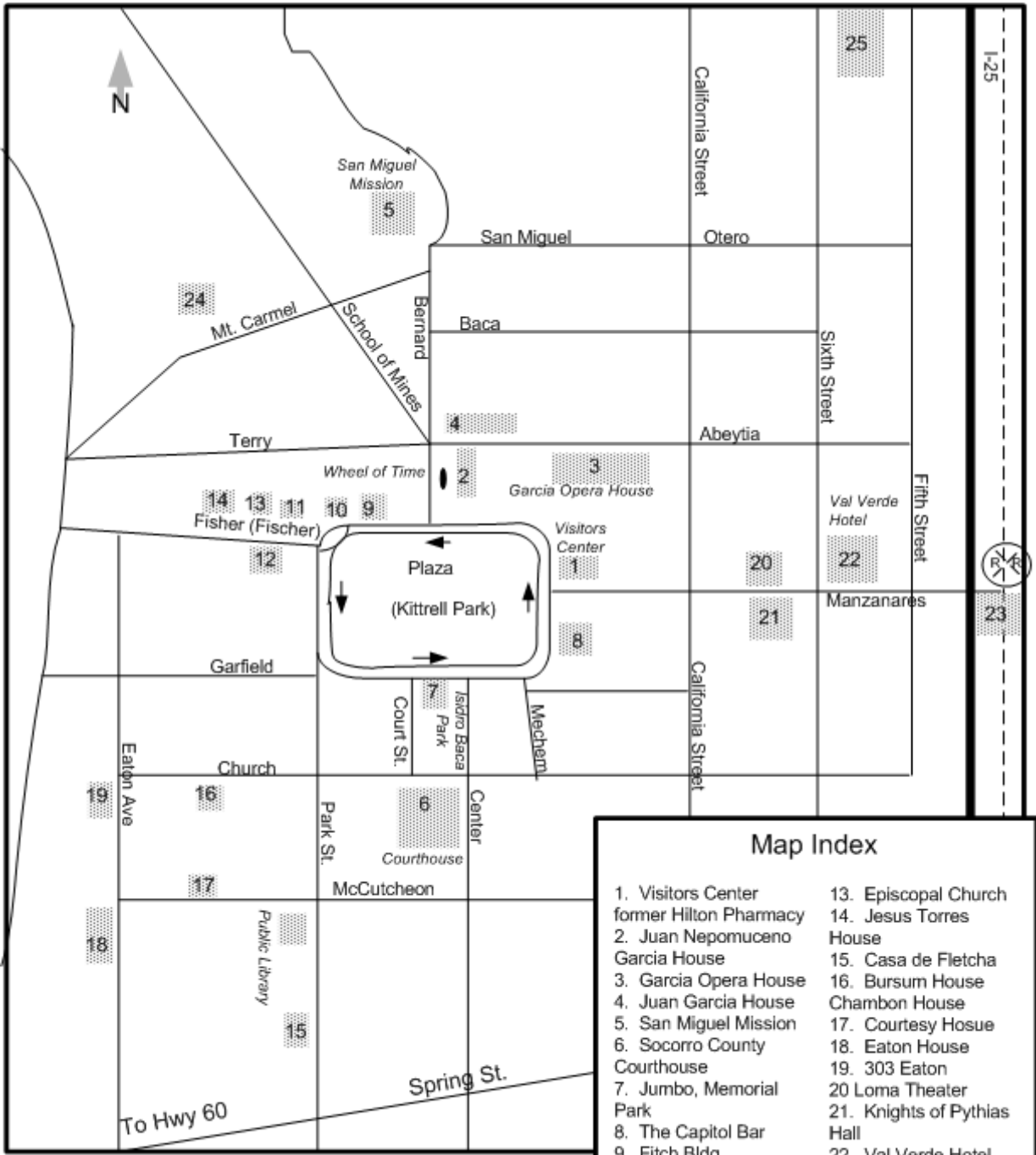
Some of the best examples of boom-period houses. Most of the buildings date from the 1880s and early 1890s.

15. **Antonio Abeytia House, Casa de Fletcha** (House of the Arrow) Mr. Abeytia came to Socorro from Santa Fe during the boom years to settle and build his grand house. When the boom ended, Mr. Abeytia went back to Santa Fe.
16. **The Bursum and Chambon Houses.** Both houses were built by the same carpenter (whose name is lost to us.) The copper roof of the Bursum house weathered into the spectacular green patina.
17. **The Courtesy House**
18. **The Eaton House**, built in the Spanish Mexican style with a later addition which makes it unique. In 1904 and 1906, Socorro was struck with a swarm of earthquakes. Although they did little damage, the earthquakes spurred Mr. Eaton to try to earthquake-proof his house with horizontal rods driven through the walls with star-washers visible on the outside. He also strengthened the corners with board strips.
19. **303 Eaton Ave.** This house of territorial style

sports a most un-New Mexican element in the Widow’s Walk on the roof.

Manzanares Street From The Plaza

20. **The Loma Theater** was originally built as the Price-Loewenstein Mercantile Store. These two brothers-in-law fled from oppression in Europe as did so many German-Jewish families and they came searching for business opportunities. The building was later used by the National Guard before becoming a theater. It was extensively remodeled by her neighbor, First State Bank.
21. **Knights of Pythias Hall** is one of the few surviving two-story commercial buildings of the boom years. It was unique to Socorro because of the cast-iron elements of the façade. The Owl Cigar advertisement uniquely identifies the building. A recent addition on the west side of the building complements the old style.
22. **The Val Verde Hotel** was built in 1919 and reflects the California Mission influence. The hotel served the tourists from the railroad and increasing numbers using the new fangled automobile. Sixth street was the Ocean-to-Ocean Highway into Socorro, now U.S. 60 on California Street.
23. **The Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway Depot** at the end of Manzanares Street dates from 1880. The station building was closed in November, 1988
Beyond the Plaza
24. **The Stapleton House**, 313 Mt. Carmel, built in the 1880s.
25. **Hammel Brewery and Museum** built by the Hammel brothers during the boom years, the brewery produced Illinois Beer until shut down by prohibition. The Hammels then operated an icehouse and soft drink bottling plant until the 1950s. Clarence and Francis Hammel donated the building to the Socorro County Historical Society.



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Socorro
N. M., USA
San Miguel Mission

Wheel of Time just north of the Plaza depicts the history of Socorro



The Socorro Plaza

Tour Brochure

Take along this handy guide to some of the many historical buildings around Socorro.



Garcia Opera House



Juan Garcia House

Val Verde Hotel
203 Manzanares



Illinois Brewery & Hammel Museum